



Meet the Cododo



Aruba Birdlife Conservation

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LIVE ENTERTAINMENT 7 DAYS A WEEK

PROFESSIONAL COMPLIMENTARY PICTURES ON TUESDAY AND FRIDAY

SUNDAY: MARRYBELL MADURO SINGER 6:30 TO 8:30 P.M.	MONDAY: ANDERSON BAHAMON SINGER 6:30 TO 8:30 P.M.	TUESDAY: JEAN PAUL SAXOPHONIST 6:30 TO 8:30 P.M.	WEDNESDAY: MAILLEYN ALVARADO VIOLINIST 6:30 TO 8:30 P.M.	THURSDAY: MARRYBELL MADURO SINGER 6:30 TO 8:30 P.M.	FRIDAY: MAILLEYN ALVARADO VIOLINIST 7:00 TO 9:00 P.M.	SATURDAY: RICKY THOMAS GUITAR 6:30 TO 8:30 P.M.
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X files? Trump says he's ordering release of data on UFOs and aliens

Washington, United States
 U.S. President Donald Trump said Thursday he is ordering federal agencies to begin "identifying and releasing" government files related to UFOs and aliens, a move sought for decades by some Americans.
 "Based on the tremendous interest shown, I will be directing the Secretary of War, and other relevant Departments and Agencies, to begin the process of identifying and releasing Government files related to alien and extraterrestrial life, unidentified aerial phenomena (UAP), and unidentified flying objects (UFOs)," Trump posted on his Truth Social platform.
 While he did not specify whether classified documents would be released



A man poses at an entrance gate to the Nevada Test and Training Range, located near Area 51, on September 20, 2019 near Rachel, Nevada.

to the public, Trump added that the files should include "any and all other information connected to these highly complex, but extremely interesting and important, matters." Earlier in the day the Re-

publican president claimed that one of his Democratic predecessors, Barack Obama, had revealed "classified" information in his recent viral podcast remarks about the existence of extraterrestrial life.

"They're real, but I haven't seen them and they're not being kept in... Area 51," Obama told host Brian Tyler Cohen, referring to the top-secret US military facility in Nevada at the heart of many UFO conspiracy theories.
 "There's no underground facility. Unless, there's this enormous conspiracy and they hid it from the president of the United States." Asked on Thursday about the comments, Trump told reporters that Obama "gave classified information, he is not supposed to be doing that."
 The president did not specify what part of Obama's remarks were classified, but claimed "he made a big mistake."

For his own beliefs about aliens, Trump, 79, said "I don't know if they are real or not."
 No evidence has been produced of intelligent life beyond Earth.
 Interest in UFOs and UAP has been renewed in recent years as the US government probed numerous reports of seemingly supernatural aircraft, amid worries that adversaries could be testing highly advanced technologies.
 In March 2024, the Pentagon released a report saying it had no proof that UAP were alien technology, with many suspicious sightings turning out to be merely weather balloons, spy planes, satellites and other normal activity.

U.S. cattle farmers caught between high costs and weary consumers

Ashland, United States
 In rural Virginia, dozens of young cows belonging to Chris Stem graze by a frozen pond. He is living his childhood dream of being a farmer -- but reality is starting to bite.
 Despite soaring beef prices as the US cattle population hit a 75-year low, farmers like Stem are feeling the squeeze from steeper business costs, budget-conscious consumers and President Donald Trump's trade policy.
 "The cost of doing business is almost outpricing (our ability) to continue to raise cattle," Stem told AFP.
 "From cutting hay to feeding the cattle to maintaining equipment, maintaining staff, feed, everything has gone up," he said.
 "When does that stabilize and stop?"
 Trump's latest move to boost Argentine beef imports is adding to concerns, vexing a key support base of the Republican president as midterm elections approach.

Stem, 40, has a herd of around 250 cattle in Ashland, Virginia.



Chris Stem, 40, a cattle farmer on Oakland farm checks a mineral feeding bucket near part of his herd in Ashland, Virginia on February 12, 2026.

Most are sold at larger markets where they are purchased and fed to slaughter weight, while around 15 percent is processed nearby and sold at Stem's butcher shop.
 For him, higher beef prices have been a double-edged sword.
 His revenue from selling cattle has risen, but so have operational costs.
 And there are limits to how much he can hike consumer prices at his shop to make up the margins.
 "They will only spend but so much on a cut of beef, es-

pecially when you have imported meats that you can purchase for 50 percent to 60 percent less at a larger store," Stem said.
 Already, ribeye that sold for \$14.99 a pound in 2019 now sells for \$32.99, he said.
 His customer sales have dropped by 30 percent.
 To afford the property, he has diversified operations at Oakdale into winemaking and hosting events like weddings.

- 'State of crisis' -
 Steeper beef prices have become a symbol of high

living costs in the world's biggest economy, which has fueled voter frustration.
 Last fall, Trump demanded that ranchers slash their prices.
 Trump has since exempted Brazilian beef from sharp tariffs, and moved this month to expand imports of trimmings from Argentina to cool ground beef prices.
 Yet, officials predict costs will keep creeping up.
 Beef and veal prices were up 15 percent year-on-year in January while ground beef prices, which hit a new high in December,

have continued climbing.
 Costs will likely stay elevated as consumer demand remains robust, while it takes years to rebuild

American herds depleted by drought and import restrictions over a parasite.
 Meanwhile, American farmers and ranchers fear Trump's policies will undercut their production and profits.
 "We do need to feed the people of the United States," said Stem. "But we're opening a door that's going to, I think, significantly harm farmers."
 "I'm a supporter of the Republican administration," he added. "I'm not a supporter of the of the unknowns that we get right now."
 The Ranchers Cattlemen Action Legal Fund United Stockgrowers of America warned recently: "Our industry is in a state of crisis and needs protection against price-depressing imports."
 Iowa farmer Lance Lillibridge told AFP that cattle producers have been "living off very skinny margins" for years.

Fans flock to Japan zoo to see viral baby monkey Punch

Ichikawa, Japan

Dozens of fans flocked to a Japanese zoo on Friday to catch a glimpse of a baby macaque who shot to social media stardom months after being abandoned by his mother.

Six-month-old Punch became an internet sensation after footage of him clinging forlornly to zookeepers and dragging around a stuffed orangutan toy was widely shared on X.

Punch's mother, perhaps due to it being her first litter or reduced stamina from the summer heat, showed no interest in caring for her young, the Yomiuri Shimbun newspaper reported. Japanese baby macaques cling to their mothers to feel safe and to build up their muscles.

The zoo looked for an alternative, such as a towel or different soft toy, but Punch

chose the long-legged orangutan.

"It was easy for him to grab," a zookeeper told Fuji TV.

"Maybe he also liked (that) it looked like a monkey."

Punch's predicament sparked sympathy online, spawning a devoted fanbase who began posting updates on the monkey under the hashtag #HangIn-There Punch.

The baby monkey was raised in an artificial environment after being born in July, and began training to rejoin his troop last month. His situation began looking up this month when zookeepers at Ichikawa City Zoo, near Tokyo, posted that he was gradually integrating, including "playfully poking others and getting scolded".

On Friday, more than 100



This photo taken on February 19, 2026 shows a 7 month-old male macaque monkey named Punch, who was abandoned by his mother shortly after birth, spending time with a stuffed orangutan toy at Ichikawa City Zoo and Botanical Gardens in Chiba Prefecture.

visitors gathered around the zoo's monkey enclosure, straining to take photos and shouting "hang in there!" as Punch tried to approach others in the troop.

"We're here since this

morning. We rarely come to a zoo but we wanted to see cute Punch," said 32-year-old Sayaka Takimoto, who drove two hours with her husband to see the monkey.

The couple said they found social media posts of Punch

carrying around the soft toy "adorable".

Another visitor, who gave her name as Yoko, said: "He's so cute, so I had to come see him."

"I studied his pictures in advance so that I could recognise him," the 50-year-old told AFP.

"It makes me a little sad he's growing so fast, but I'm relieved to see he's making friends."

Some fans, however, were worried by a widely shared video showing Punch being dragged by an adult monkey.

The zoo issued a statement on Friday asking them to "support Punch's efforts" to socialise as his troop has not shown any serious aggression.

"While Punch is scolded (by other monkeys), he shows mental strength and resilience," it said. □

'Alpha male' AI world shuts out women: computing prof Hall

New Delhi, India

Artificial intelligence could change the world but the dearth of women in the booming sector will undermine pledges for inclusive technology, top computer scientist Wendy Hall told AFP on Friday.

Hall, a professor at Britain's University of Southampton known for her pioneering research into web systems, said that the gender imbalance had long been stark. "All the CEOs are men," the 73-year-old said, describing the situation at a major AI summit held in New Delhi this week as "amazingly awful".

"It's totally male-dominated, and they just don't get the fact that this means that 50 percent of the population is effectively not included in the conversations."

Gender bias "creeps through everything, because they don't think about it when they build their products", Hall said.

She was speaking in an interview at the AI Impact Summit, where dozens of governments are expected to lay out a shared vision on how to handle the



Joelle Pineau of Meta (C) speaks at the Advancing Sustainable Development through Safe, Secure, and Trustworthy AI Event at Grand Central Terminal on September 23, 2024 in New York.

promises and pitfalls of generative AI.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who is pushing for India to become a global AI power, said Thursday that advanced computing systems "must become a medium for inclusion and empowerment".

But when he posed on stage for a photo with leading tech business figures, 13 men were present and only one woman -- Joelle Pineau, a former Meta researcher who is now chief AI officer at Cohere.

It was a similar story at another photo opportunity with world leaders includ-

ing French President Emmanuel Macron and Brazil's Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva.

- 'Biased world' -

Many studies have shown how generative AI tools like ChatGPT and Google's Gemini reflect stereotypes contained in the vast streams of text and images they are trained on.

"We're a biased world, so the training is done on biased data," Hall said.

A 2024 UNESCO study found that large language models described women in domestic roles more often than men, who were more likely to be linked to words

like "salary" and "career". While tech companies work to counter these built-in machine biases, women have found themselves targeted by AI tools in other ways.

Several countries moved to ban Elon Musk's Grok AI tool this year after it sparked global outrage over its ability to create sexualised deepfakes depicting real people -- mostly women -- in skimpy clothing.

Hall, a longtime advocate for women in technology, said that things had "not really improved that much" since she had her start decades ago.

"In AI, it's getting worse."

Few women choose to study computer science in the first place, then "once you get more senior, women fall away", Hall said.

Women-led startups "don't get the investment that the men get", and many simply "get fed up", she added.

Women also "drop out because they just don't want to be part of that alpha male world".

- 'Felt like giving up' -

Hall, who wrote her first paper about the lack of women in computing in the late 1980s, said she had faced "all sorts of barriers" during her career.

"I've had to push through, be strong, have good mentors. And yeah, I felt like giving up many times."

She was made a dame in 2009, and has also acted as a senior adviser to the British government and the United Nations on artificial intelligence.

But at her first job interview at a university nearly five decades ago, "I was told I couldn't have the job because I was a woman" by an all-male panel, she recalled. □

New study probes why chronic pain lasts longer in women

New York, United States
 To all the women who've heard the frustrating "it's all in your head" in response to medical maladies, a new study out Friday feels your pain.

Research published in the journal *Science Immunology* shows that women actually do experience exacerbated chronic pain compared to men -- a gap that can be explained by biological differences in the immune system.

"The pain of women has been overlooked in clinical practice," lead author Geoffroy Laumet told AFP, "with the idea that it's more in the mind, or that it's because women are softer and more emotional."

"But here, our study shows that the difference is real... it's not a social construct. It has a real biological mechanism that is behind it."

Pain occurs when neurons react to stimuli: stubbing your toe, or tripping and skinning your knee, for example.

But chronic pain persists with mild to no stimulation and women constitute 60 to 70 percent of the patients experiencing it, Lau-



met said.

down those pain-sensing Those cells are more active

A patient receives an X-ray at a free health clinic on July 22, 2017 in Wise, Virginia.

The scientist at Michigan State University said his team set out to explore how hormone-regulated immune cells, known as monocytes, impacted pain resolution.

Researchers learned those monocytes play a key role in communicating with the neurons that sense pain -- and then working to shut

neurons by producing the anti-inflammatory interleukin 10, or IL-10.

Their studies weren't originally aimed at exploring potential differences related to sex, but the data was clear: it took longer for pain to resolve in female mice, and the monocytes producing IL-10 were less active in them.

in males, according to the study, which cited higher levels of sex hormones like testosterone as an explanation why.

Laumet is hopeful the new research could open new doors to improved pain treatment.

In the long-term, he said research can probe how to stimulate the monocytes

and boost IL-10 production to "enhance the body's ability to resolve pain."

And in the short-term, he sees the potential for topical testosterone to prove a viable option to alleviate localized suffering.

- 'More equitable care' -

Elora Midavaine a researcher at the University of California, San Francisco who also studies chronic pain -- told AFP the new study adds "important nuance" to how we understand the interactions of hormones and the immune system, and their influence on pain.

Midavaine, who was not involved in the study, said it fits into a broader movement focused on intersections of neuroscience with both immunology and endocrinology an approach she said "has potential to advance our understanding of chronic pain in women."

Laumet said he hopes that improved understanding and potential new treatment avenues could reduce prescriptions of opioid painkillers, which have high risks of side effects and addiction.

Celestial "Conga Line": Rare six-planet parade visible this weekend

Stargazers are in for a rare treat as a "planetary parade" featuring six of our solar system's planets begins to align across the evening sky this weekend, February 20-22, 2026. While the alignment builds toward a peak later this month, this weekend offers a crucial

window to spot some of the most elusive members of the group.

Planetary Line up

Starting Friday evening, February 20, Mercury, Venus, Saturn, and Jupiter will be visible without aid, while Uranus and Neptune will require binoculars or a

telescope.

Western Trio: Immediately after sunset, look toward the western horizon to find Venus, Mercury, and Saturn clustered together.

Mercury's Peak: This weekend offers the best opportunity of the year to see Mercury. Having reached its "greatest eastern elongation" on Feb. 19, Mercury is at its highest point in the sky, making it easier to spot before it dips back toward the sun.

Moon's Path: A slender waxing crescent moon will serve as a guide. It will appear roughly 14% illuminated on Friday and will climb higher each night as it passes near the planetary line.

Jupiter: Bright Jupiter will

be positioned much higher in the south/southeast within the constellation Gemini.

How to Watch

The best viewing window is brief, lasting approximately 30 to 45 minutes after local sunset.

Find a Low Horizon: A viewing spot with no buildings, trees, or mountains blocking the view is necessary because Mercury, Venus, and Saturn are very low in the west.

Use "Anchor" Objects: Locate Venus first, as it will be the brightest "star" in the west. Mercury will be positioned to its lower right, and Saturn just above it.

Optical Aids: To see Uranus (near the Pleiades cluster)

and Neptune (near Saturn), binoculars or a small telescope will likely be needed.

Explanation of the Event

A planetary parade is a visual illusion that occurs when multiple planets gather on the same side of the sun from Earth's perspective. While the planets appear to form a "conga line" in the sky, they remain millions of miles apart in space. A full seven-planet alignment will not occur again until February 2034. Looking ahead: The parade will reach its most tightly grouped "peak" on February 28, 2026, before the inner planets begin to disappear into the sun's light in early March.



In this handout provided by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), the dwarf planet Pluto (R) and Charon are shown July 11, 2015.

Japan's 'godless' lake warns of creeping climate change

Suwa, Japan

The Japanese priest and his parishioners gathered before dawn, hoping that climate change had not robbed them of the chance to experience an increasingly rare communion with the sacred. The few dozen men, most in their sixties, were headed to Nagano's Lake Suwa in search of a phenomenon called "God's Crossing" that has gone from reliable to elusive in recent decades.

Known as "miwatari" in Japanese, it occurs when a crack opens up in the frozen lake surface, allowing shards of thinner ice to break through and form a ridge where local deities are believed to cross.

For centuries, the priest of the nearby Yatsurugi Shrine has led an annual watch for the crossing, contributing to a unique record of a changing climate.

This year's watch began on January 5, with Kiyoshi Miyasaka a priest in Japan's Shinto religion leading the flock.

One man carried a woman flag, another a giant axe. All wore jackets bearing the shrine's crest.

They set out with hope, despite a seven-year stretch in which the God's Crossing has not appeared once.



This picture taken early on January 29, 2026 shows parishioners of Yatsurugi Shrine gathering on the frozen surface of Lake Suwa, before measuring the ice, in Suwa city of Nagano Prefecture.

"This is the start of the decisive 30 days," Miyasaka told them.

But as they neared the water, dark and choppy in the pre-dawn light, Miyasaka's staple smile disappeared. "How pitiful," he said, lowering a thermometer into the water.

Miyasaka's predecessors noted when the entire lake surface froze, and when the miwatari appeared. More recently, priests have added temperature readings and ice thickness. Consecutive records date all the way back to 1443, though the shrine's priests

only took over the job in 1683.

"The chronicle shows data taken at a single location over hundreds of years, and thanks to it, we can now see what the climate was like centuries ago," said Naoko Hasegawa, a geographer at Tokyo's Ochanomizu University. "We find no other meteorological archive comparable to it," she told AFP. "Global researchers who study climate history see it as a very valuable set of observation records."

'A warning from nature'

The God's Crossing has not appeared since 2018, an absence that both scientists and believers attribute to climate change.

"We are seeing the signs of climate change in many places of the world, and Lake Suwa is no exception," Miyasaka told AFP. "Nature doesn't lie."

Traditionally, the ice ridges were believed to represent the path of a god crossing the lake to visit his goddess wife.

Scientists explain them a little differently. They appear if the lake sur-

face freezes entirely, which requires several days below minus 10C.

The ice lid contracts and expands with temperature fluctuations between night and day, opening cracks that fill with shards of newly frozen lake water.

They crash against each other, producing a distinctive roaring sound, and sometimes rise to eye level. Takehiko Mikami, who has studied the phenomenon with Hasegawa, remembers seeing it in 1998.

"The surface froze completely to about 15 centimetres (six inches) thick. We could walk all the way across the lake to the other shore," said the professor emeritus at Tokyo Metropolitan University.

His research shows the crossing appeared almost every winter until the 1980s, but since then morning temperatures have often failed to fall enough for the lake to freeze over.

"This is a warning from nature," said Mikami.

'Open sea'

For a time, this year's season brought hope.

On January 26, after weeks of frigid dawn observations, Miyasaka and his flock recorded a full freeze, smiling in delight as a chunk of ice was carved for the priest to measure. □

Antarctic drilling peers deep into ice shelf's past

Wellington, New Zealand

Scientists say they have drilled deeper than ever beneath the West Antarctic Ice Sheet, peering back millions of years to reveal signs it was once, at least in part, open ocean. The vast expanse is estimated to hold enough ice to raise global sea levels by four to five metres (13 to 16 feet), said the international team of 29 researchers. By drilling through the ice and the sediment below, they retrieved samples showing what it was like up to 23 million years ago. The hope is that by studying how it melted in Earth's past, they

can determine the factors that drove its retreat, including the ocean temperature at the time.

This may help determine how fast the ice sheet will melt in the future in Earth's warming climate. "Satellite observations over recent decades show the ice sheet is losing mass at an accelerating rate, but there is uncertainty around the temperature increase that could trigger rapid loss of ice," they said in a report released Wednesday of their initial observations. "Up until now, ice sheet modellers have re-

lied on geological records from further afield." They drilled through 523 metres of ice and 228 metres of ancient rock and mud at Crary Ice Rise on the Ross Ice Shelf, said the team led by Earth Sciences New Zealand, Wellington's Victoria University, and Antarctica New Zealand.

'Marine organisms'

"Some of the sediment was typical of deposits that occur under an ice sheet like we have at Crary Ice Rise today," said co-chief scientist Molly Patterson of the United States' Binghamton University.



This handout photo dated January 2, 2026 and released by Ana Tovey/SWAIS2C on February 17, 2026 shows researchers extracting a core at the drilling site in West Antarctica.

But they also found shell fragments and the remains of marine organisms that need light -- material more typical of an open ocean, an ice shelf floating over ocean, or an ice-shelf margin with icebergs

calving off, Patterson said. Scientists already thought the region was once open ocean, indicating a retreat of the Ross Ice Shelf, and potential collapse of the West Antarctic Ice Sheet. □

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A general view of a small scale open pit copper and manganese mine in Serenje, Zambia's Central Province, on February 28, 2025

World copper rush promises new riches for Zambia

Cape Town, South Africa

Five years after becoming Africa's first Covid-era debt defaulter, Zambia is seeing a dramatic turnaround in fortunes as major powers vie for access to its vast reserves of copper.

Surging demand from the artificial intelligence, green energy and defence sectors has exponentially boosted demand for the workhorse metal that underpins power grids, data centres and electric vehicles.

The scramble for copper exposes geopolitical rivalries as industrial heavyweights -- including China, the United States, Canada, Europe, India and Gulf states -- compete to secure supplies.

"We have the investors back," President Hakande Hichilema told delegates at the African Mining Indaba conference on Monday, saying that more than \$12 billion had flowed into the sector since 2022.

The politically stable coun-

try is Africa's second-largest copper producer, after the conflict-ridden

Democratic Republic of Congo, and the world's eighth, according to the US Geological Survey.

The metal, needed for solar panels and wind turbines, generates about 15 percent of Zambia's GDP and more than 70 percent of export earnings.

Output rose eight percent last year to more than 890,000 metric tons and the government aims to triple production within a decade.

Mining is driving growth that is forecast by the International Monetary Fund to reach 5.2 percent in 2025 and 5.8 percent this year, which places Zambia among the continent's faster-growing economies. "The seeds are sprouting and the harvest is coming," Hichilema said, touting a planned nationwide geological survey to map untapped deposits.

But the rapid expansion of the heavily polluting industry has also led to warnings about risks to local communities and concerns of "pit-to-port" extraction, in which raw copper is shipped directly abroad with little domestic refining.

'Dramatic new chapter'

"We need to be aware of the potential for history to repeat itself," said Daniel Litvin, founder of the Resource Resolutions group that promotes sustainable development, referring to the colonial-era scramble for Africa's resources.

There is a risk that elites will be enriched at the expense of the broader population, while "narratives of partnership" offered by major powers can mask underlying self-interest, he said.

Chinese firms have long dominated the sector in Zambia and control major stakes in key mines and smelters, cementing Beijing's early-mover advantage. □

Barcelona's Sagrada Familia basilica hits peak height

Barcelona, Spain

Constructors crowned the largest tower of Barcelona's unfinished Sagrada Familia basilica with a final piece on Friday, setting the peak of the world's tallest church at 172.5 metres (566 feet).

Completion of the entire Sagrada Familia, however, is expected to be completed in around a decade's time.

The tower milestone comes more than 140 years after famed Catalan architect Antoni Gaudi designed the monument that has become a symbol of Spain's second city and a globally renowned tourist attraction.

The completion of the 17-metre-high white cross that stands at the top of the Jesus Christ tower is part of a set of 18 towers originally conceived by Gaudi.

A swarm of tourists craned their necks to see the installment of the cross's upper arm, visible amid the scaffolding and workers who put finishing touches from the irhamesse s.

"Today was a day we had been eagerly awaiting. Everything has gone well, very well," head architect Jordi Fauli told reporters, including AFP.

The Jesus Christ tower is scheduled to be blessed on June 10 after the dismantling of the scaffolding to coincide with the centenary of Gaudi's death.

Rumours abound that Pope Leo XIV will attend, but the Vatican is yet to confirm a visit to Spain.

The extra height now atop the Jesus Christ tower means the Barcelona basilica now surpasses Ulm Minster in Germany as the world's tallest church.

A litany of delays has slowed completion of the Sagrada Familia.

The Covid-19 pandemic scuppered a previous target to finish the work this year, depriving the basilica of crucial income from ticket sales.

The Sagrada Familia is Spain's most-visited church that charges an entrance fee, selling 4.8 million tickets in 2024. □



A crane lifts the final piece of the 17 meters high and 13.5 meters wide cross that completes the Sagrada Familia's Tower of Jesus Christ in Barcelona on February 20, 2026.

Birds of Aruba

ORANJESTAD — On May 11th, 2010, the Aruba Bird-life Conservation was founded with the aim of protecting the biodiversity in general and birds in and around Aruba in particular.

Among other things, the foundation will focus on increasing the survival chances of species of wild birds by promoting their preservation and conservation. The foundation publishes the most beautiful pictures of local birds on their social media that show us the beauty of Aruba's birds and nature in general. Aruba Today gives you a little peek with the following pictures and descriptions from the foundations Facebook page.

The Great Egret
Serenity in Aruba's National Park, a Great Egret flying in peace. When it is peaceful and quite, beautiful things



start happening in nature. Canadian in the house
The breeding season is over and it's getting pretty cold in North America. Shore birds have started moving southwards as early as July. This wetland beauty wants to keep its toes warm. Our Canadian friends know exactly where they can do so best. A Greater Yellowlegs rediscovers Aruba's Bubali Wetlands.
Cabochon

In its living form of so much more value than any gemstone. Aruba's smallest and most master of flight. A top pollinator. A hovering Blenchi inspecting the human who just entered his territory. English: Blue-tailed Emerald (male) Dutch: Blauwstaartsma ragdkolibrie (mannetje).

Aruba's to enjoy. Aruba's to protect.



Lessons from our elders: Plants and fruits for medicinal use

(Oranjestad)— Though western medicine is now widely used for common illnesses and to keep our bodies healthy and happy, it is still very common in every household in Aruba (and around the world) to have staple home remedies that is passed on through generations. Here are some tips that our elders have passed on to us over the years.

Sweet potato
According to our elders, sweet potato is mostly useful for low blood pressure. People who suffer from low blood pressure were advised to eat sweet potato 2 to 3 times a week. However, if you have high blood

pressure, it is best not to eat too much sweet potato, as this raises blood pressure. Sweet potatoes are also great for people who work hard labor jobs, and it's been said to be aid blood circulation in the body, as well as help those with hemorrhoids or diarrhea.

Many of our elders opted to plant sweet potatoes themselves, mostly because of how easy it was to do so. Cut the end of a sweet potato let it sit in shallow water until it starts to sprout. Then you may plant it in the ground. Sweet potatoes need plenty of water to grow, especially in the first week in the ground. It was said that once you start to



notice the ground crack underneath the flowers, it is time to harvest. This should happen around month 3.

Pomegranate
Pomegranates are also one of the easier fruits to plant and harvest. Originated from Persia, this plant can grow almost everywhere. In Aruba, there are many homes that have a tiny or big pomegranate tree. You may be wondering what the difference is between a small and big pomegranate tree, for which the answer is based on harvest time. Tiny

trees produce tinier pomegranates that can be harvested early on. Contrarily, big trees produce bigger pomegranates, but they need enough time to fully ripen before harvesting, otherwise you might end up with bitter seeds. Pomegranate trees are also very easy to plant. In essence, if you just throw the seeds on the ground, they could grow into a tree.

In terms of medicinal use, pomegranate skins are said to have a few benefits for our health. According

to customs, pomegranate skin tea can help those that suffer from diarrhea. Dried pomegranate skin tea is also good for people who have worms. Pomegranate flowers can be boiled to make a drink and this can be used for irritated gums; just take a swig and let the tea sit in your mouth for a couple minutes.

Source: Remedios Kustumbertinos Beunan (Medicine and Customs of our Elderly) by Dinah Veeris



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Meet the Cododo

ORANJESTAD - Colorful or camouflaged, you're bound to encounter a variety of lizards basking in the sun or scurrying on their way in our island.

Aruba, as a desert island, is home to an incredible variety of unique and colorful species. Among them we can find different lizards, most of which have South American origins. But there are a few exceptions, for instance the Blue Cododo.

These are one of the most striking lizards in Aruba, recognizable by the male's bright blue color.

The Aruban whiptail lizard, *Cnemidophorus rubens*, is a species endemic to Aruba, meaning you can only find it here on our One Happy Island! They are also recognized as the most common and populous lizard on the island. While the male is blue with white dots, the female is brown with blue dots.

These charming lizards eat mostly plants, such as flowers, nectar, leaves and fruits, and occasionally enjoy some insects.

They are selective in which plants they eat, because of the toxins present in many



available plants species.

The Cododo help take care of Aruba's vegetation

by playing a significant role in the dispersal of seeds for certain plants: when they eat fruit, they excrete the

seeds in diverse locations, contributing to the reproduction cycle of our local plants.

Surf's Up: Favorite places to catch waves in Aruba

ORANJESTAD - Whether you are a salt-seasoned surfer looking for a thrill, or just looking to wet your toes in a little ocean adventure, Aruba has amazing places to learn and practice surfing! Although more known for the calmer waters of Palm Beach, Eagle Beach and Mangel Halto, Aruba also has some special places to thrill your senses. Because of strong winds and breezes, Aruba is perfect for wind and kite surfing. You will surely notice kites in the air as you drive around the wilder, rougher areas on Aruba's east side.

There are plenty of surf shop rentals to help you with your gear, and there are also a lot of tutors if you're looking to try for the first time and need a little help. These can be found around the island, and will surely come

in hand if you want to try a new experience!

With that said, here are Aruba's favorite surf spots!

Andicuri

Andicuri is recognized as the best place for body boarding. Because of the rough waves, this beach is better suited for those with more experience in surfing. However, the beach with two bluffs - one on each side - is worth a visit, if only to watch the exciting show presented by the surfers.

To go to Andicuri, you will need a 4x4 vehicle and drive from the ex-Natural Bridge Center. Alternatively, you can make it an adventure by going on a hike! The scenery is unique and beautiful on its own.

Reaching Andicuri Beach

can be an adventure in itself, as it can be difficult to find and is only accessible by 4x4 vehicle or walking from the ex-Natural Bridge center, but the impressive scenery makes it all worthwhile!

Arashi

Arashi, a beach located close to the California Lighthouse, is a good spot for learning and having fun - if you're lucky! The waves at Arashi are usually calm, but with just the right weather, a swell forms attracting all the local surfers to the area.

Boca Grandi

Boca Grandi is at the most southern spot in Aruba, and is a popular spot with experienced surfers. Close to the famous Red Anchor and our beloved Sunrise City - San Nicolas, a trip to Boca

Grandi can easily turn into an all-day trip to this area of the island. With a beautiful beach (although it is not allowed to swim here, because of strong currents), you can enjoy a relaxing time combing the beach for driftwood, coral, and little crabs and snails.

Hadicurari

Here is where you will find most of the action for surfers in Aruba. With a variety of surf shops and schools in this area, you will find it easy to get in on the action. Hadicurari is also the site of the Aruba Hi Winds World Challenge, which takes place usually in June/July, and it is the largest windsurfing competition in the Caribbean!

Malmok

If you're a beginner, this is your spot. There are also

various shops to rent gear and receive lessons, facilitating learning and just trying out a new experience. The beach is also popular for paddleboarding and other water sport activities.



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Place names in San Nicolas and their origins



(Oranjestad)—If you're ever taking a tour of Aruba, San Nicolas would definitely be on your itinerary. From relaxing on the white, sandy beaches of Baby and Roger's Beach, to exploring the prehistoric caves of Quadirikiri and Fontein, you are taking in a full view of what San Nicolas has to offer. But did you know that you are also passing through areas whose names have historical origins? Here are a few place names in San Nicolas and their origin story.

Sero Colorado

On your way to Baby or Roger's Beach, you'll pass by the famous Red Anchor at what was once the entrance to the Colony residential community and be greeted with red soiled hills by the coast. This is Sero Colorado. Named after the 30-meter, deep red, limestone hill, "Sero Colorado" translates to "Colored Hill". Sero Colorado has deep historical ties with the once-thriving phosphate industry in the area. Matter of fact,

there are still underground shafts and passages deep in Sero Colorado from the time of phosphate mining. In 1958, the refinery at the time, Lago, adopted this name for the residential section of its employees.

Vader Piet

Another well visited area, Vader Piet is located in the Arikok National Park. Recognizable sites within this area include the Wind Mills and the Quadirikiri Cave. The origin of this name is part historical and speculation, as there are slight deviations from what actually happened.

In 1829, Pieter Lampe was a planter and the person responsible for governing this remote area. As the story goes, Pieter was well known and beloved for his kindness and good treatment of his employees, and was therefore also called Vader Piet (Father Piet). However, he was tragically murdered—some speculate at the hands of a slave. For his work and good heart, the

area was named after him.

San Nicolas

Of course we can't forget San Nicolas itself. Much like Vader Piet, the origin of the name San Nicolas has so far two different accounts. In the literal sense, "San Nicolas" translates to "Saint Nicolas", leading many to believe that this district was named after a Spanish saint. Though one account does support this with the theory that the district was named after the saint by Spanish colonizers, the other account is much less divine, but does refer to an influential figure in the area.

Nicolaas van der Biest was a successful landowner during the time of the phosphate boom in late 19th century Aruba. Back then, landowners (most, if not all of them men) were referred to as "Shon" by their subordinates. So, the district was originally named after Shon Nicolaas. Over time, the name evolved into what is now San Nicolas.

Skipp and Winnie are back for a 6 week vacation on the island



This power couple has been coming to Aruba for the last 42 years for about 2 to 3 times a year.

Winnie is a retired school teacher and Skipp still working in his garage "Speed Garage" for almost 62 years. This year Winnie celebrated her 87th years here in Aruba surrounded

by all her Aruban friends at the Red Parrott. Over the years they have brought many friends to Aruba and this week about 20 of their neighbors decided to join them here in Aruba. Aruba does have so many friends but sure they are in the top on the list.

Photo by Steve Frances.

The history and meaning of the Aruban florin

(Oranjestad)—Aruba Today loves to share parts of the Aruban culture with our readers, diving into (historical) facts of Aruba, its culture and way of living. In this article, we'll look at the Aruban florin: its history, design and symbolism.

In Aruba, we know the 5, 10, 25 and 50 cent coins, along with the 1 and 5 Florin coin. Aruban Florin bills include the 10, 25, 50, 100, and rarely, the 200 bills. In Papiamentu we call our currency Florin, but the umbrella term for money is 'placa'. Cents are called 'cen' (pronounced: seng), both in the singular and plural form. Most coins are circular and their size depend on their worth. However, the 50 cent coin is easily recognizable by their square shape, as is the 5 Florin coin by their golden color. Every coin has the Aruban emblem carved on it, with the other side displaying the worth of the coin. The bigger 1 and 5 florin coins, however, contain the carving of the emblem on one side, while displaying the side profile of the Dutch king, Willem-Alexander, on the other side. When his mother, Princess Beatrix, was reigning queen, it was her profile that was carved on the two coins.

Outdated Aruban coins and their names

In the past, Aruban coins had distinctive names and also varied in worth. For example, a 5-cent coin was once called 'Dos Placa'; 10-cent coins were called 'Debchi'; 25-cent coins were called 'Diez Placa' and the 50-cent coin was once called 'Yotin' (pronounced: jo-teen). We also used a distinctive coins worth 2 ½ cents, called placa too. However, this last coin is no longer in use and has become a relic of Aruban money. Back then, the 5-Florin coin used to also be square, but now it is circular.

Aruban bills: their design and symbolism

The Aruban Florin collection contains a variation of col-



orful bills, displaying incredibly detailed and beautiful designs that tell the story of Aruba on a single piece of paper.

Prior to 2019, the Aruban Florin bills were relatively simpler in design compared to now, but still included beautiful designs and colors, often depicting local animals. These past designs were made by the Aruban artist Everino Fingal in 1990 up to 2019. Between 1990 and 1993, the 5 Florin coin was a bill. The Fingal designs also included a 500-Florin bill, which has now been discontinued.

In 2019, the Central Bank of Aruba commissioned a new design of the Aruba Florin bills, this time selecting artist and former art teacher, Nigel Matthew, to present his new design. Matthew kept the tradition of including local animals and the familiar colors on the bills. However, he included additional designs that represent the Aruban culture and link to the Indigenous inhabitants that were the first to set foot on the island.

Current design and symbolism

10 florin

On the 10-florin bill, you can see a Tortuga blanco (white turtle). The blue color symbolizes the blue Caribbean Sea. You can also see the ruins of the Bushinbana Gold Mill Ruins, a coral motif, and the symbols of Cas Floria (traditional Aruban house design) with a

piece of mosaic.

25 florin

On this orange bill, you can see an Aruban medicinal plant called Shoshoro. The birds Tupaia, Shoco, rock drawings, and the symbols of Cas Floria with a piece of mosaic are also depicted. There is also a Purun diceramica (clay pot), in reference to the relics left behind by our indigenous ancestors.

50 florin

On this bill, we see the Cododo (blue lizard found on the ABC islands), Cangre di tera (land crab), Willem III Tower, and again the symbols of Cas Floria



with a piece of mosaic, as well as a beach plant called Banana di rif. The colors are pink/purple.

100 florin

This bill is green in color, representing nature. Here we see the Yuwana (Iguana), Aloe, Tòteki (lizard), the symbols of Cas Floria with a piece of mosaic, and a dance group performing the Baile di cinta (folkloric dance with silk ribbons).

200 florin

There is another bill with a value of 200 dollars. The brown color symbolizes the earth of Aruba. Here we see the Domasol and the Warawara—both local birds,

along with the symbols of Cas Floria with a piece of mosaic, the Tuna cactus plant, and the Caha di orgel (folkloric instrument, used for many traditional songs).

Extra fact:

The word "florin" is supposedly named after the Italian city of Florence or it's a reference to the Italian word "florino", both explanations related to historical Italian currencies.

Source: Placa, placa, placa by the National Library of Aruba (BNA).



Aruba: the legend behind its name

(Oranjestad)—Most folkloric tales and legends in Aruba revolve around our indigenous ancestors, who came from mainland Venezuela, and discovered the island and made it into their new home. This particular legend tells the story of the birth of the Aruba name.

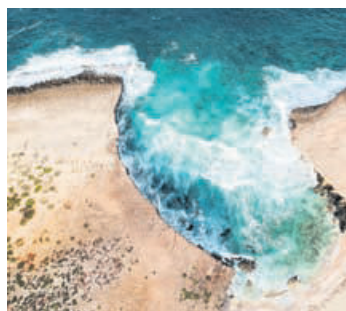
The legend follows the life of Arua, an indigenous Cacique originally from Aroa in the Falcon state in Venezuela in the year 50 AD. Arua had a son around the year 70 AD with his wife Shira, who they named Combori. When Combori was old enough, he joined his father on the usual boat trip to the islands of Curaçao and Bonaire to gather salt.

On their way back to Mainland Venezuela, they were caught up in a heavy rain storm—a side effect from a passing, but far away, hurricane. Of course, because of the lack of motors and sail, their boat was left in the mercy of the heavy winds. After a while, the storm started to pass, and the clouds began to clear up. Finally able to see

around them, the Cacique spotted land approximately an hour away. So, they started to row in that direction until they reached the coast.

Once they arrived on what they thought was Venezuela, they decided to stay the night and fix their kayak. The next morning, the Cacique ordered his son and a few warriors to go find any sign of population in the area: “Combori,” Arua said. “Don’t come back without news. It’s in your hands how long we stay here till we find our family. So, if you need to take a week to gather information, we will wait for you.”

“Don’t worry,” Combori replied. “As soon as we have any information, we will let you know.” Armed with arrows and spears, backpacks filled with food and water containers, they set off. They climbed several small hills, but no sign of a village. They crossed different dry riverbeds, but no sign of anything. When the sun finally descended, they found themselves near a fairly tall hill and decided to



climb it for a better view of a village. This hill was called Pan Dushior Orcuyo, which today we call Hooiberg.

The next morning, they could clearly see that they have landed on an island, but an unfamiliar one at that. When Combori went back to where his father was waiting, he told him the news: “Father Arua, you have just discovered an island, but it is not Curaçao or Bonaire. Far in the south, we saw the big mountains of our homeland Venezuela, which we could have never seen on the other island. This leads us to believe we are on a new island. But that’s not all. When the sun came up, we saw in the distance a glowing plain, which we think may be salt.”

The Cacique was pleased to hear of his son’s findings. He decided to stay a couple days on the newly-discovered island in search for salt. The next morning they ascended Hooiberg again and stayed to see if they could find nearby smoke, indicating an inhabitant village. But they found nothing. So they went back to their initial arrival settlement, now known as Santo Largo in Savaneta. The next morning they hiked along the Spaans Lagoen near the Mangel Halto Beach and reached the area of Bushiri. There, they boarded their kayaks and heading to what we know now as

Malmok, where they found rocks of salt. After a couple days of exploring the island and gathering some salt rocks, they left for Venezuela, where they were reunited with their families.

Throughout the year, they travelled back and forth to Aruba, collecting salt. After a while they settled on the island, generations of families living along the coast. Combori was the first indigenous inhabitant in our history to explore the entirety of the island.

Arua, after decades as the leader of his tribe, spent his last days on the island. Having reached 80 years old, he called for his family on his death bed. In his hammock, he said: “My children, many years have passed, and I’ve asked my warrior to bring me back to the island so I can laid to rest. The God of living has given me the gift of life to see my son, grandchildren and great grandchildren. But now he is calling me home. Combori, my torch is now passed to you. Guide our people, and be the leader you were always meant to become. If one day you leave my island,

do not forget that it is also yours. This is my last wish: When I die, bury me in our maize plantation.”

And so when the Cacique passed away, his wishes were granted and he was laid to rest in the area we now know as the Paradera Cemetery. Where he used to live, they built the Paradera Church.

And that is the tale of what inspired the Aruba name. In the generations that lived or travelled back and forth to the island, there were many familiar names*, like Guadiri, a warrior who was there when the island got discovered and his son, whom he called Huliba; Combori and his children, Comdori, Camacuri and Turibana, Masiduri; and Malmok, the 13-year-old boy who alerted the Cacique when the Caribes attacked.

Familiar names: all these names are familiar to Arubans, as these are the names of places and plants on the island.

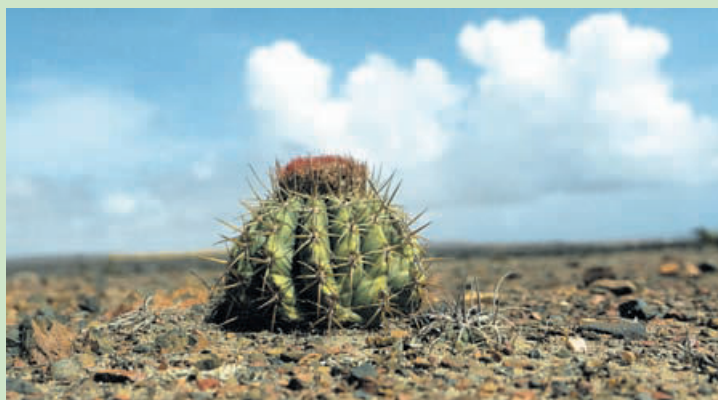
Source: Un storia die Indjan Arua (A story of the Indian Arua) by Adolf (Dufi) Kock.

Aruba to me

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Complete the sentence: Aruba to me is Send your picture with that text (including your name and where you are from) to: news@arubatoday.com and we will publish your vacation memory. Isn’t that a special way to keep your best moments alive?

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By THOMAS JOSEPH

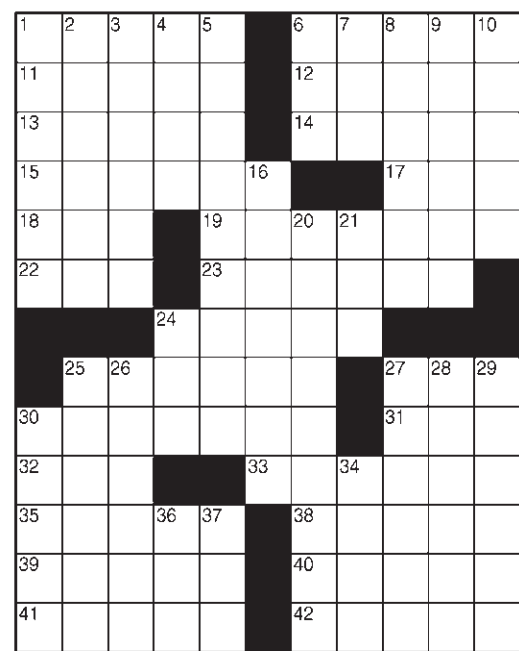
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35 Makes do
38 Plain silly
39 Garth
Brooks's
birthplace

MOLAR CARAT
ADORE ALONE
PECKS PACTS
KITS SKIT
OVEN PIKE
KID PARADES
RETRO INTRO
ADHERES HAS
EATS PESO
CADS SLAB
ALOOF ALOES
STONE TIARA
HORSE ENTRY



3-4

AXYDLBAAXR
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

3-4 CRYPTOQUOTE

LZZ MEFKXQRW ALNQ WQDKQC

HQWCJXLCJEXW ES UAJDA CAQ

CKLNQZQK JW FXLULKQ.

— PLKCJX TFTQK

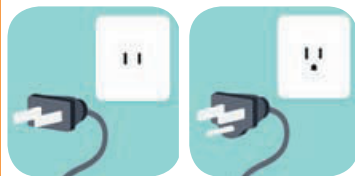
Cryptoquote: LIFE IS THE FLOWER
FOR WHICH LOVE IS THE HONEY. — VICTOR
HUGO

Cruise ship Schedule: Feb. 17 - 24 2026

			ARR	DEPT	BERTH	
TUE	17	CARNIVAL HORIZON	08.00	22.00	B	1
		NORWEGIAN SKY	13.30	22.30	C	1
WED	18	SERENADE OF THE SEAS	08.00	23.00	C	1
		FREEWINDS	06.00	****	E	1
THU	19	AIDABLU	08.00	18.00	B	1
		MSC DIVINA	08.00	18.00	C	1
FRI	20	NORWEGIAN STAR	11.00	20.00	C	1
SUN	22	ISLAND PRINCESS	08.00	17.00	B	1
		EXPLORA I	08.00	18.00	C	1
MON	23	MARELLA DISCOVERY 2	08.00	20.00	C	1
		FREEWINDS - Dept.	****	22.30	E	-
TUE	24	OCEANIA INSIGNIA	08.00	17.00	B	1
		NORWEGIAN SKY	13.30	22.30	C	1
		OASIS OF THE SEAS	08.00	23.00	I	1

Helpful tips for your stay on Aruba

(Oranjestad)—When traveling to another country, especially for the first time, it is always better to be over-prepared than under-prepared. That is why we have a list of basic but important information that we think may come in handy to Aruba's visitors.



Electrical power

Aruba generally operates on 110V to 127V supply voltage and 60Hz. There are also three types of outlets used on the island: type A with two flat prongs; type B with two flat and one grounding prong, and on occasion, type F with two round prong and two earth clips on the side. However, Type A is most commonly found in homes and establishments.



Drinking water

The water that flows through the sinks of every house, hotels and other establishments is distilled and perfectly safe to drink. Aruba's drinking water exceeds WHO's international standards for water quality, so there is no need to buy bottled water from the store.



Safety

Since February 2024, Aruba has been categorized as the safest country in the Caribbean by The Telegraph, and many tourists that visit have often told us how they feel safe to explore the island or walk around at night. However, rare incidents do occur, so keep yourself and your belongings safe.

SUDOKU

To play sudoku, use logic to fill the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the numbers 1-9 only once. Puzzle difficulty increases from Monday to Sunday.

King Classic Sudoku

8					2		4
5		4		1			
			3	4	5		
1	6		5				9
				7	3		5
		7	8				
		5		3	7		
	1	3				2	
6	7			2			

Difficulty: ★★★★★

2/21

Answer to previous puzzle

4	9	1	2	7	6	3	8	5
3	8	6	5	1	4	7	2	9
2	7	5	9	8	3	4	1	6
9	3	4	1	6	8	2	5	7
7	5	8	3	2	9	6	4	1
1	6	2	4	5	7	8	9	3
8	4	3	6	9	5	1	7	2
5	2	7	8	3	1	9	6	4
6	1	9	7	4	2	5	3	8

Difficulty: ★★★★★

2/20

I never thought it would be hit, says 'Scream' creator 30 years later

Paris, France

When he sat down to write the first "Scream" film which appeared in cinemas exactly 30 years ago, horror movies were out of fashion and aspiring Hollywood creative Kevin Williamson had low expectations.

"I never thought it would be a hit actually. I was just trying to get a job. I was just trying to write a script to get noticed by Hollywood so that I get hired to write another movie," he told AFP.

"And I just wrote what I love: I love horror films," he added.

When "Scream" came out in 1996, directed by Wes Craven, it sparked a host of copycat slasher movies and has gone on to become one of the most successful horror franchises in the history of cinema.

The white mask of the Ghostface killer has become a pop culture reference.

The opening scene featuring its signature mix of fear and dark humour with Drew Barrymore, the film's biggest star who is killed within 12 minutes is considered by many as one of the most memorable openings in the whole genre.

Williamson, who is directing "Scream 7" which comes out this week after a hugely troubled lead-up, took his original inspiration from a real-life serial killer who murdered four students in Florida in 1990.

"I just got so scared that I spawned the show," he explained.

Craven, who also made the cult "Nightmare on Elm Street" films, died in 2015 after working on four Scream films with Williamson.

"When Wes passed, I had sort of said goodbye to the franchise, and thinking it was over for me," Williamson told AFP. "And then when they brought me back into the fold, I got excited again."

- Abuse -

The Scream franchise has been hugely profitable



Kevin Williamson attends the "Scream 7" x TikTok Stab House Experience at the Lombardi House on February 13, 2026, in Los Angeles, California.

over its three decades, with the exception of Scream 4, grossing an estimated billion dollars or more in total at the box office, according to industry figures.

Williamson was executive producer on the fifth and sixth instalments but is a director for the first time for Scream 7 which became embroiled in a very public off-screen row about the war in Gaza.

Lead actress Melissa Barrera was fired for criticising Israel's devastating bombardment of Gaza, co-star Jenna Ortega walked out, and original director Christopher Landon quit over

the ensuing furore.

"The amount of abuse that I had to deal with I decided I didn't want to give any part of myself to that," Landon told Vanity Fair of his decision last year, saying he had been wrongly blamed for the decision to fire Barrera.

Scream 7, stylised as Scream VII, has not been shown to critics and releases in most countries around the world over the next week, landing at a time when horror movies are back in vogue.

"Sinners" and "Weapons" both of which Williamson praised were some of last year's buzziest hits.

"The horror genre is so cyclical," Williamson added. "We go through cycles and it's usually connected to what's going on in the world. Horror has always been a mirror to society."



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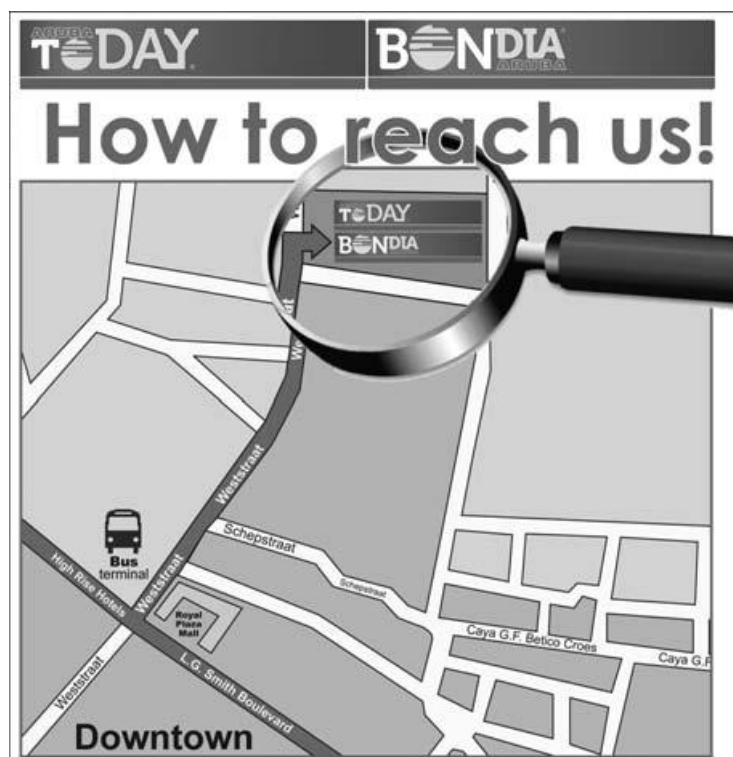
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ARUBA TODAY NEWS

Svitolina edges Gauff to set up Pegula final in Dubai

Dubai, United Arab Emirates

Elina Svitolina reached her first WTA 1000 final since 2018 with a marathon 6-4, 6-7 (13/15), 6-4 victory over third-seeded American Coco Gauff at the Dubai Championships on Friday. In a rematch of their Australian Open quarter-final last month, Svitolina repeated her success against Gauff, this time after a grueling three-hour duel, to book a final showdown with another American, Jessica Pegula.

Earlier on centre court, Pegula maintained her perfect record against Amanda Anisimova and triumphed 1-6, 6-4, 6-3 in an all-American battle to reach her first final in Dubai. Svitolina has been in fine form so far this season, amassing a 15-2 win-loss record. The Ukrainian seventh seed started her year by winning a title in Auckland, before reaching the semi-finals at the Australian Open and now advancing to the third Dubai final of her career.

She returned to the top 10 in the world rankings earlier this month, for the first time since 2021, and the first time as a mother.

"To be honest I'm speechless after that fight," said the two-time Dubai champion, who needed six match points to close out the win.



Ukraine's Elina Svitolina hits a return against U.S.' Coco Gauff during their women's singles semi-final match at the Dubai Duty Free Tennis tournament in Dubai on February 20, 2026.

"I was really trying to put myself out there and was playing like there is no tomorrow, in a way. It's really, really special to be in a final here and have the chance again to lift that beautiful trophy."

Gauff once again faced issues with her serve and finished the match with 12 double faults.

"I've been doing everything you've wanted for six months [and I haven't gotten] any better," Gauff said, looking towards her box.

The 21-year-old hired a biomechanics coach Gavin

MacMillan to help rework her serve and fix the problems with it, but Gauff continues to struggle with that shot, and struck 16 double faults in her third-round match earlier this week.

Despite that, the two-time major champion found a way to save four match points in the second-set tie-break to force a decider against Svitolina.

Gauff broke early in the final set, but Svitolina pegged her back. The battle went down to the wire and it was a few mistimed forehands from Gauff that gave Svitolina the opening in the last game to complete an

emotional victory.

"Coco is such a big fighter, I was expecting she would come back in the match, she won so many big battles, big tournaments. I had to keep fighting, keep pushing. I'm very pleased with the fight, very pleased with the win today," said Svitolina.

'Happy' Pegula

In what was also an Australian Open quarter-final, Pegula fought back from a set and a breakdown to claim her fifth victory in as many meetings with Anisimova. Pegula made it to at least the semi-finals in each of

her last seven tournaments dating back to the 2025 US Open and has now reached the 21st final of her career and eighth at the WTA 1000 level.

"At the start of the third it was 1-all and I looked to my coach and said, 'I'm just happy to still be here right now'," said Pegula, who turns 32 on Monday.

"That would be an amazing birthday present (if I won the title). I'm not going to mention how old I'm turning. I came here with the intention thinking I could play well in these conditions and I'm giving myself a shot at winning the title tomorrow." In just the second all-American semi-final in tournament history, Anisimova enjoyed the better start, leaping to a 3-0 advantage and she extended her lead to scoop the opening set in under 30 minutes.

Anisimova broke early in the second but Pegula finally started to find her game and after a slew of service breaks, it was the fourth seed who closed out the set to level the contest and force a decider.

Pegula swung the momentum her way and drew first blood in the final set, opening up a 4-1 gap with an inch-perfect lob. It was all she needed to complete her two-hour victory and remain undefeated against Anisimova. □

'Proud' Alcaraz digs deep to topple Rublev and reach Qatar final

Doha, Qatar

World no. 1 Carlos Alcaraz needed six match points before finally toppling defending champion Andrey Rublev 7-6 (7/3), 6-4 on Friday to reach the final of the Qatar Open.

After two hours, two minutes on court, the Spaniard extended his perfect winning record to 11 matches this season.

Playing his first tournament since completing his career Grand Slam at the Australian Open earlier in February, Alcaraz will face either Arthur Fils or sixth seed Jakub Mensik, who defeated Jannik Sinner in

the last eight, in the final.

"The way that I am ap-

proaching every match, I'm just really proud about



Spain's Carlos Alcaraz hits a return against Russia's Andrey Rublev during their men's singles semi-final match at the Qatar Open tennis tournament in Doha on February 20, 2026.

it," said seven-time Grand Slam winner Alcaraz.

"It's something I am trying to be better at and it's paying off. I'm proud of myself (for) getting better and maturing."

He twice failed to serve out the opening set and saw a 3-0 lead in the second quickly wiped out. He then missed three match points on serve at 5-3 when Rublev staged another fightback.

But Alcaraz held his nerve and after failing with two other match points sealed the match on his sixth to reach the Qatar final for the first time.

"If you want to find a solution to a problem, you should find it in a calm place," said Alcaraz who needed three sets to get past former champion Karen Khachanov in the quarter-finals.

"It's something I am working on. When I am playing and getting mad, seeing I'm not at my best, I just get frustrated. That is not the place you will find solutions.

"In these matches, I have been really calm, thinking clearly and being positive. It's in those places where you can find the solutions to a problem." □

Teen burnout to Olympic gold: Alysa Liu 'looking to inspire others'

Milan, Italy

Newly crowned Olympic women's figure skating champion Alysa Liu says she wants her story to "inspire others" after the golden return of a former child prodigy who suffered burnout.

Liu stepped away from figure skating aged just 16 years, tired of the endless training and wanting to live the life of a normal teenager.

But she returned to the rink even stronger two years later, and on Thursday night the 20-year-old produced an electrifying performance that put the US women back on top of the Olympic women's podium for the first time since 2002.

"Honestly, it was more than just work, it was experience," Liu said after her second gold of the Milano-Cortina Games having helped the US defend their team title.

"The last time I was skating, it was so rough. I genuinely can't begin to start (talking) on it. It took a lot to get to this point, and studying psychology has really helped. I love psychology." The daughter of a Chinese political refugee, Liu started skating at the age of five with her life consumed by the sport as a child.

The Californian won her first senior US title aged 13, landing a rare triple axel



Gold medallist USA's Alysa Liu poses with her medal following the victory ceremony of the figure skating women's single free skating final during the Milano Cortina 2026 Winter Olympic Games at Milano Ice Skating Arena in Milan on February 19, 2026.

jump and breaking Tara Lipinski's record to become the youngest national champion.

For her first Olympic Games four years ago Liu's preparation was disrupted by Covid.

After testing positive she missed the US trials but was still selected for the Beijing Games where she finished sixth.

The following month, in the absence of Russian skaters she won the bronze medal at the 2022 world championships, giving the United States its first world medal

in the women's event since 2016.

But just a few weeks later Liu announced that she was ending her career, saying she felt she had achieved all her goals in the sport.

Away from competition, she got her driver's license, enjoyed holidays, went to concerts and experienced something she had not before a normal teenager's life.

"Honestly, I didn't have many people to look up to," she explained.

"I only really had myself, and I think that's all I need-

ed. I got 'alone' time (during the pandemic). I got to think a lot.

"When Covid hit, that's when I had my first 'what to do with myself' moment. It was like a 'lightbulb' moment.

"I was also going through puberty and my brain helped with that process (of understanding herself). A lot has happened in four years."

- Mental health awareness - She began to miss skating and competition and laced up her skates again for the 2024-2025 season. In her very first year back,

she won the world championship title shocking three-time reigning champion Kaori Sakamoto.

For her second Olympic Games, the 20-year-old skater approached things with a "completely different" mindset compared to Beijing.

"This time just feels so completely different. I know who I am as a person now," she said.

Showing her own style with her streaked "Halo" hairstyle, she opened her competition by winning the team title.

Then, in the individual event, she placed third in the short programme, just 2.12 points off the lead.

Two days later, she skated a magnificent free programme to the disco sounds of Donna Summer and lit up the Milano Ice Skating Arena.

She gave the United States their first Olympic title in the women's event since Sarah Hughes in 2002 and first medal since Sasha Cohen's silver in 2006.

"I have no idea how I am going to deal with it (the fame). I'll probably wear some wigs when I go outside," she laughed.

"I think my story's more important than anything to me and that's what I hold dear and this journey has been incredible. □

Seattle Seahawks put up for sale after Super Bowl win

Los Angeles, United States

The Seattle Seahawks have officially been put up for sale, the club said on Wednesday, just weeks after the NFL franchise won the Super Bowl.

The Seahawks have been owned by the Allen family since 1997, when the club was purchased by late Microsoft co-founder Paul Allen.

His sister Jody has controlled the team since Paul's death in 2018, and has long said that it would eventually be sold under her brother's plans to give

most of his wealth to charity.

"The Estate of Paul G. Allen today announced it has commenced a formal sale process for the Seattle Seahawks NFL franchise, consistent with Allen's directive to eventually sell his sports holdings and direct all Estate proceeds to philanthropy," said an official statement.

Talks with potential buyers are expected to continue through the 2026 off-season. NFL owners must then ratify a final purchase

agreement.

The Seahawks defeated the New England Patriots 29-13 earlier this month, to claim just their second Super Bowl win.

Shortly before the NFL championship decider, US media had reported that the sale was imminent and that talks "at ownership and league levels" had already begun.

The reports, citing anonymous NFL and Seahawks sources, claimed that the franchise was valued at \$7 billion to \$8 billion.



General manager John Schneider of the Seattle Seahawks celebrates with fans during the Seattle Seahawks Super Bowl IX victory celebration and parade at Lumen Field on February 11, 2026 in Seattle, Washington.

The franchise has been based in Seattle since it was founded in 1974. It was reportedly on the cusp of a controversial move to Los Angeles before it was

bought by Allen in 1997. Allen also purchased the Portland Trail Blazers NBA basketball team, which is currently being sold off by the family estate. □

Messi kicks off MLS season in key World Cup year

Los Angeles, United States
 Lionel Messi kicks off a critical season for Major League Soccer this weekend as the rapidly growing US domestic league seeks to cash in on a huge spike in interest from the upcoming World Cup. Messi, MLS's undisputed flagship star, will lace up his boots for a fourth year with Inter Miami, who take on South Korean ace Son Heung-min's Los Angeles FC in Saturday's opener at the 70,000-capacity Memorial Coliseum. It is a suitably splashy start for a season that will be split in two by the 2026 World Cup, which takes place across the United States, Canada and Mexico this summer. World Cup host countries typically see boosts in at-



Inter Miami's Argentine forward #10 Lionel Messi (C-D) celebrates scoring his team's first goal during the friendly football match between Ecuador's Barcelona and the US' Inter Miami at the Banco Pichincha Stadium in Guayaquil, Ecuador, on February 7, 2026.

tendance and interest for their domestic leagues, and MLS bosses are determined to keep U.S. eyeballs on the planet's biggest sport long after national teams have returned home.

"This is a massive year for Major League Soccer," said league commissioner Don Garber, describing the season as "a seminal moment for our sport."

The MLS season will this year have a seven-week interruption for the World Cup in June and July.

Five MLS stadiums will host World Cup matches, while many more will be used as training facilities and fan zones.

An increased number of MLS players are expected to play in the World Cup, including Son and potentially Messi, though the Argentina great has not yet confirmed he will participate in a record sixth World Cup.

The league plans to use the season's bifurcation to its advantage in order to draw in new fans.

A rumored \$15-30 million marketing spend throughout the international tournament will encourage viewers to embrace their local teams, and elevate the US domestic league's increasingly star-studded profile.

The MLS season resumes for its second half in the rest days between the World Cup semi-finals and final. An All-Star Game will quickly follow.

"MLS will be at the center of the soccer universe during the world's largest sporting event, and that creates an extraordinary opportunity for our league, our clubs, and our players," said Garber.

- New stars -

The decision to start the new MLS season with a game featuring the league's two biggest global stars, at a giant former Olympic stadium in the heart of Los Angeles, is no accident.

Garber is predicting "the largest opening weekend crowd in league history." □



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